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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: PARTNERSHIP NGO RELEASES SECOND ELECTION
OBSERVATION REPORT

REF: A. A) MINSK 132
[1](#)B. B) 05 MINSK 1437
[1](#)C. C) MINSK 138
[1](#)D. D) MINSK 0009
[1](#)E. E) MINSK 0114

Classified By: Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Despite potentially facing criminal charges for reporting any information that may discredit Belarus, election monitoring NGO Partnership anonymously sent via email its second observation report on the elections. Similar to the first report Post received (Ref A), the second report covering January 21) February 10 describes irregularities in the formation of precinct commissions, GOB pressure on signature collectors and questionable annulments of opposition signatures, and the limited amount of coverage candidates receive in the mass media. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Although recent amendments to the criminal code make it prohibitively dangerous to report any information that may discredit Belarus (ref B), election monitoring NGO Partnership anonymously emailed its second report covering January 21) February 10 election observations to its newsletter subscribers. (Note: On January 4, Partnership director Nikolay Astreiko informed Emboffs that four detailed reports on election observations from January until March would be a main component of Partnership,s long term observation plan (ref C). Astreiko told Emboffs he hopes the independent media will pick up the reports and distribute the information in them as widely as possible.)

Formation of Local Election Commissions

[1](#)3. (C) Partnership concluded that the selection process for precinct election commissions was flawed and biased, noting that only one of the 74,107 precinct commission members (0.01 percent) was a representative of the opposition. (Comment: Opposition candidate Aleksandr Milinkevich,s regional travel manager Ales Yanukevich told Poloff on February 7 that two opposition representatives were selected for the precinct commissions (Ref D).) Ten percent of the commission members were NGO representatives, but only six were from democratic NGOs. Partnership noted the numerous examples of commissions in which 90 percent of the members were from the same state-owned company, making it easy for the GOB to put pressure on the employees and, thus, the election

commissions. Partnership estimated that 99 percent of commissioners at the local, regional, and national level were ostensibly pro-Lukashenko.

Systematic Pressure Against Opposition Contenders, Campaign Teams

¶4. (C) Partnership concluded that during the signature process, GOB pressure on opposition activists working for initiative groups was &systematic& and greatly impacted election campaign conditions. Such harassment included intimidation, dismissals, detentions, home searches, and in one case, beatings. In addition, the Central Election Committee (CEC) invalidated several hundred signatures gathered by opposition contenders Aleksandr Milinkevich, Aleksandr Kozulin, and Sergey Gaidukevich for alleged irregularities, but all signatures gathered in support of Lukashenko were valid, which Partnership viewed as &highly unlikely& from a statistical standpoint.

Restrictions on Independent Media

¶5. (C) According to Partnership, the GOB greatly prevents the independent media from distributing information about the election while the state media continues to report in favor of President Lukashenko. According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, 90 percent of state TV channels, time is devoted to Lukashenko. Private newspapers would publish information on opposition candidates, but CEC head Lidiya Yermoshina announced on February 8 that publishing candidates, election material in independent media would be considered illegal material help and a violation of election legislation.

Recommendations

¶6. (C) Partnership recommended that the authorities and CEC stop pressuring the independent mass media and cease using law-enforcement to interfere illegally in the election campaign. Precinct commissions should follow Belarus, election legislation and international principles of free, open, and equal elections.

Comment

¶7. (C) The second report, like the first one, was sent anonymously and lacked the detail Partnership used in its coverage of the 2004 referendum/Parliamentary elections. Regardless, Partnership and international observers (ref E) will continue playing an important role in highlighting the many kinds of election fraud the GOB will use to secure a Lukashenko victory.
Krol